

VZCZCXRO5462  
OO RUEHDA  
DE RUEHAK #0860/01 1261415  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 051415Z MAY 08  
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6176  
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC//PA  
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU  
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8864  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4187  
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 2904  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 6585  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 6414  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2990  
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU  
RHMFISS/USDOCO 6ATAF IZMIR TU  
RHMFISS/39OS INCIRLIK AB TU  
RHMFISS/AFOSI DET 523 IZMIR TU  
RHMFISS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU  
RHMFISS/AFOSI DET 522 INCIRLIK AB TU  
RUEUITH/AFLO ANKARA TU

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000860

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL  
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
MONDAY, MAY 5, 2008

#### In Today's Papers

TGS Statements on Air Operations Against the PKK  
All weekend papers and TV channels reported that the Turkish General Staff (TGS) posted a statement on its website Saturday regarding the results of air operations near Mount Kandil in northern Iraq on May 1st and 2nd. According to the statement, "All targeted PKK/KongraGel installations in the Mount Kandil area were destroyed. Among these installations, there were places where one terrorist, who tried to govern the terrorist organization, frequently stayed. According to preliminary assessments, as a result of this operation more than 150 terrorists were rendered ineffective. The operation led to great panic among the members of the terrorist organization. It is believed that among those terrorists who were rendered ineffective were high-level officials." Saturday's TV news and Sunday papers interpreted this statement as an indication that PKK leader Murat Karayilan was killed during the operations.

Meanwhile, today's mainstream Hurriyet reports that President Gul spoke to reporters in Macedonia regarding the military operations against the PKK. He noted, "Turkey's only target is the PKK terrorists. Civilians in the region were not harmed." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports that during a meeting with lawyers from Diyarbakir, Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani said, "The PKK should abandon violence." Hurriyet and liberal Radikal report the KRG stated they will establish 40 security points along the border in order to prevent PKK infiltration from northern Iraq into Turkey.

#### PM Erdogan Discusses AKP Ideology and Syria During Interview with Newsweek

All papers report Newsweek magazine interviewed PM Erdogan, who told the magazine, "The AKP is not a party just for pious people, but is a party for the average Turk. Our AKP government proves pious people can protect secularism. Turkey has achieved success in balancing Islam, democracy and secularism. We are absolutely against ethnic nationalism, regional nationalism and religious chauvinism. Turkey's democracy could be a source of inspiration to the rest of the Islamic world." When asked about talks between

Israel and Syria, Erdogan said, "Due to Turkey's good bilateral relations with Israel and Syria, both of the countries wanted Turkey to enter into peace negotiations."

#### EDITORIAL OPINION: Newsweek and Washington Post Articles on Turkey

##### "Missing a Chance"

Gungor Mengi wrote in mainstream Vatan (5/5): "For politicians, political life includes the element of living in your own self-designed reality. The more a politician is good at this, the more he can fool others as well. There are some limits to this, of course, like Prime Minister Erdogan's recent Newsweek interview. Erdogan begins the interview with shiny and easy-listening remarks like, "The AKP is the party of average Turkish citizens." He also said, "Our party proves that those who are religious can protect secularism." He even describes Turkey as "an inspiration for the rest of the Islamic world." At this point the interviewer can't help but ask, "If you are that much of a liberal, then how do you explain the claims of anti-secularism that led to the closure case against the AKP?" PM Erdogan could not come up with a good answer to this question, so he used his usual rhetoric, "This is an ongoing judicial case about which I cannot comment." However by skirting these allegations, he missed an important opportunity. He could have admitted some of the party's mistakes, which led to the closure case. He could have expressed regret. Such an approach would gain enormous credit vis-à-vis the Turkish public opinion."

##### "Is the U.S. Leaning Toward Democracy in Turkey?"

Washington-based Ali Aslan wrote in Islamist-oriented Zaman (5/5): "A May 2nd Washington Post editorial commented on the Bush administration's approach to the danger posed to Turkish democracy.

ANKARA 00000860 002 OF 003

Washington's approach to this issue stopped short of choosing a side in the closure case, while the EU specifically sided with the AKP. It seems the Washington Post editorial could change some of the Turkey-related dynamics in the U.S. capital. The Bush administration tried to take a neutral position regarding the struggle between democratic reformist civilian powers and the pro-status-quo military and judiciary. The primary question at this point is can Washington stay neutral when democracy is at stake in Turkey? Clearly, the U.S. neo-cons are under the influence of pro-secular groups in Turkey. I wish the more democratic groups in Turkey could have a similar influence over neo-cons. When it comes to Turkey-related issues, Secretary Rice listens to advice from Dan Fried and Matt Bryza. Even though their role in shaping the current U.S. policy is unknown, it is for sure that anti-AKP lobbies in Turkey are doing their best to influence the Washington administration. The more the American administration distances itself from anti-democratic and paranoid lobbies, the more it will gain ground in Turkey's democratic public opinion. Let's hope that the Washington Post editorial becomes wake-up call."

##### Turkish Schools Teach Moderate Islam in Pakistan.

All media outlets cover the article published in The New York Times yesterday which reports that Turkish schools in Pakistan, run by supporters of Fethullah Gulen, teach a "gentler form of Islam." Islamist papers carry the report in a straightforward manner, while secularist papers carry the report with an air of sarcasm. For example, mainstream Hurriyet writes, "New York Times Reporter Couldn't Find Enough Words to Praise Gulen." Meanwhile, Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak writes, "The Gulen Movement Is A Global Movement." Okay Gonensin of mainstream Vatan notes, "The New York Times claims there are between 3 and 5 million Gulen followers in Turkey. There's a big difference between 3 million and 5 million, but if that is actually true, they could create the largest political party in Turkey." Mainstream Sabah writes, "Moderate Islam Is Taught in Pakistan in a Total of Seven Schools." Liberal Radikal writes "The New York Times praises moderate Islam," that is "taught by Fethullah Gulen schools."

##### Turkey-EU Troika Meeting Overshadowed by Closure Case, May Day Tensions

Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that Turkey and the EU Troika will meet tomorrow, but that the meeting "will be overshadowed by the closure case against the AKP." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak notes,

"EU officials will stress that the ban against the AKP is incompatible with European values." Meanwhile, columnist Semih Idiz of mainstream Milliyet expresses concern that "the EU did not criticize the AKP's handling of May Day" which Idiz notes is also not compatible with European values. Nevertheless, Zaman notes that "police brutality will be discussed," and "EU officials will say the police's intervention on May Day will harm Turkey," as "the image of police brutality will harm Turkey's image." Saturday's Yeni Safak notes EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn identified "rifts in Turkey between extreme secularists and secularists, and between elites and the middle class." Semih Idiz, in Milliyet, calls this characterization, "too simplistic to reflect the complicated social dynamics of Turkey."

#### Secretary Rice in the Middle-East

Milliyet reports U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited the Middle-East for the 15th time within two years and this time she met with Palestine leader Mahmud Abbas and Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak. Milliyet notes Rice criticized Israel for building housing units in the West Bank, stressed that the U.S. will support Syria-Israel peace negotiations as long as the negotiations do not cast a shadow over the Israel-Palestine peace negotiations, and emphasized that Syria must change its Lebanon policy.

TV News:  
CNN Turk

ANKARA 00000860 003 OF 003

#### Domestic News

Professional Military Service begins in Turkey. By the end of this year, reserve officers will no longer serve as commandos. By the end of 2009, privates will no longer serve as commandos. After 2010, commando brigades will consist only of officers, non-commissioned officers and senior sergeants.

Four PKK terrorists were captured in Hakkari.

Unidentified people fired at the headquarters of Yeni Safak daily in Istanbul last night around midnight. No injuries were reported, but there was material damage to the fifth floor of the building.

A Vatan newspaper journalist and a photo journalist were beaten by the members of the Ismailaga religious community Mahmut Hoca in Beykoz district of Istanbul

#### International News

A cyclone killed more than 350 people in Myanmar

Afghanistan security officials arrested two government employees on charges of links to Al-Qaeda and involvement in a plot to kill President Karzai

Israeli PM Olmert and Palestinian President Abbas are planning to meet in Jerusalem this week.

WILSON